

Focus on Education

Beating the odds

Twins pursue medicine through Navy scholarship

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One of the least known and seemingly most unlikely source of procuring military medical doctors is the United States Naval Academy, the Navy's premiere officer training institution located in Annapolis, Maryland. Each year the academy graduates over one thousand Midshipmen to serve as unrestricted line officers.

The vast majority of the graduates serve as surface warfare officers, aviators, nuclear-trained submarine officers, combat Marines and even Navy SEALs.

Over the years, the Naval Academy has permitted a limited number of its graduates to enter the Medical Corps and pursue medical degrees after graduation. Although it has fluctuated in recent years, the Navy has permitted approximately 10 graduates to enter the Medical Corps. That is less than one percent of the graduating class.

"When my brother and I decided to attend the academy, from the very beginning, our intent was to compete for one of those 10 slots. Well, for both of us to get into the Medical Corps, we actually needed two of those 10 slots," said Eric Emerling, a 2013 graduate of the Naval Academy who is currently attending the Mayo Medical School in Rochester, Minn. "It was an ambitious goal and, when I think back on it now, I realize how unrealistic it may have been. What are the odds?"

Yet, Eric and his identical twin brother, Alec, beat the odds and became the



Alec and Eric Emerling are pictured standing below the class of 1979 crest, the year that their father, David Emerling, graduated from the U.S. Naval Academy. The Emerlings became the first twins accepted into the Medical Corps since the Naval Academy was established in 1845. (Photo courtesy of David Emerling/Released)

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Alec Emerling is currently attending Georgetown University School of Medicine in Washington, DC.

Alec reflects back to his Plebe (freshman) year, "It seemed daunting. I thought I was competing against the over 1,200 members of my class for one of 10 slots. What in the world was I thinking? Then I realized that not everybody wanted to be a doctor. Ultimately, the only person I was competing against was myself. I decided that I controlled my own destiny and that my goal could only be achieved by successfully meeting the challenges of the next four years."

The challenges were plenty. The Naval Academy is a rigid, 4-year program

that, regardless of one's major, has mandatory studies in Naval Science, Leadership, Navigation, American Naval Heritage and Weapon Systems. The training continues throughout the summer months. There are time consuming military and athletic requirements, as well.

"It's not exactly a pre-med program," said Eric, "but all the necessary courses that medical schools are looking for are available at the academy. The challenge was trying to fit them into your schedule and find a way to excel while dealing with all the other course requirements and military responsibilities. Fortunately, Alec and I did well on the Medical College Admission Test (MCAT) so, apparently, the courses we took prepared us well. I think most importantly, we were fortunate to have some great professors."

"You don't have to be superman. I certainly didn't get an A in every course," said Alec. "I think having a twin brother with the same goal helped a great deal. When one was down the other would pick him up. We just never gave up. I think that's the key."

The Emerling brothers were both accepted into the Navy Health Professions Scholarship Program (HPSP). Nonetheless, they still had the requirement of gaining admission into medical school on their own merit just as countless other college graduates do throughout the country every year.

Navy Medicine has a lot to offer: expert guidance and assistance, excellent training, leadership and man-

agement skills, and financial stability, all while you earn an impressive benefits package that could include education opportunities and incentives, loan repayment assistance, specialty pay, and travel and more.

The Navy Health Professions Scholarship Program (HPSP) is an outstanding way to pay for a student medical school and to ensure immediate employment following graduation. The HPSP covers 100 percent of tuition during medical school, a sign on bonus of up to \$20,000 and a monthly stipend of \$2,157. No previous military experience is required, although applicants must be physically qualified and otherwise eligible to serve in the Navy and be accepted to an accredited medical school.

Acceptance of the scholarship obligates the student to serve on active duty for four years as a licensed physician. The four years may be served as a general medical officer immediately after completing internship, or may be deferred until completion of specialty training.

"It's a great program. Eliminating the financial distractions that often accompany a medical education is a big relief. I feel like I can really focus on my studies," Eric admits.

For more information on Navy Health Professions Scholarship Program (HPSP): visit <http://www.navy.com/careers/healthcare/physician>. For more information on Navy Medicine: visit <http://www.med.navy.mil>. To find a Navy Recruiter near you: visit <http://www.navy.com/locator>.

Education Notes

EDUCATION PROGRAMS FOR MILITARY SPOUSES

Are you taking advantage of all your benefits? Find out during Education Programs for Military Spouses, March 26, noon – 12:30 p.m. at the Fleet and Family Support Center (FFSC), building 30. Guest speakers will be Dr. Alex Carter, director, Navy College Program and Dr. David Drye, representative, Coastline Community College Spouse Program. Seating is limited to first 40 to pre-register at 228-871-3000. Feel free to bring a lunch, bottled water will be provided.

BABY-SITTING CLASSES

Back by popular demand on TWO different dates to accommodate area Spring Break schedules. Baby-sitting classes for youth (11 years old and up), will be held at Fleet and Family Support Center (FFSC), April 14, at 9 a.m. and April 21, at 9 a.m. Please call FFSC at 228-871-3000 to preregister.

HURRY - LAST DAY TO REGISTER FOR CLASSES WITH COASTLINE COMMUNITY COLLEGE (CCC)

Registration ends March 20 for Spring "B" term at CCC. To register, contact Dr. David Drye, 228-871-3439 or stop by the Navy College Office, building 60, room 239.

NCBC School Liaison Officer Kevin Byrd is located at MWR, Building 352, 1706 Bainbridge Ave., Phone: 228-871-2117, Email: kevin.r.byrd@navy.mil